

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 301608Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2639

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USUN NEW YORK 2821

USINT BAGHDAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1428

EXDIS

DEPT PASS DIA WASH AND USCINCEUR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS MOPS PLO LE IS

SUBJECT: PROPOSAL FOR CONSTRUCTION OF LEBANESE SECURITY FENCE ALONG
ISRAELI BORDER

SUMMARY: WE NOTICE THAT ISRAELI DEFMIN PERES, IN HIS
JAN 23 MEETING WITH SENATOR PERCY (TEL AVIV 553),
REFERRED TO IDF'S PROPOSAL THAT GOL ERECT ITS OWN
"SECURITY FENCE" ALONG LEBANESE -ISRAELI BORDER. WE
GATHER THAT PERES REGARDS SUCH STEP AS SOME KIND OF
PROOF THAT LEBANESE ARMY IS REALLY INTENT ON STOPPING
FEDAYEEN CROSS-BORDER FORAYS INTO ISRAEL. IN OUR
VIEW, HOWEVER, SUCH FENCE COULD OFFER SOME DETERRENCE BUT WOULD
NOT RPT NOT STOP SUCH FORAYS, SINCE IT WOULD BE BEYOND LEBANESE
ARMY'S
ABILITY TO MAINTAIN AND PATROL AND WOULD ENCOURAGE FEDAYEEN TO
DEVISE NEW (OR RESORT TO OLD) METHODS OF HARRASSING
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ISRAELI BORDER SETTLEMENTS. IT WOULD ALSO POSE UN-

ACCEPTABLE POLITICAL RISKS FOR GOL IN ITS RELATIONS
WITH FEDAYEEN AND THEIR LOCAL SYMPATHIZERS HERE. END
SUMMARY.

1. AS NOTED USDAO BEIRUT 001 JAN 75, CONSTRUCTION OF
LEBANESE "SECURITY FENCE" PARALLELING ISRAEL'S OWN ANTI-
INFILTRATION BARRIER ALONG LEBANESE-ISRAELI BORDER
WOULD BE A COSTLY AND TIME-CONSUMING UNDERTAKING. MORE-
OVER, WITH LEBANESE ARMY ALREADY STRETCHED EXTREMELY
THIN IN GROUND IN BORDER AREAS AND UNABLE -- FOR
REASONS OUTLINED OUR 807 -- TO REINFORCE FURTHER ITS
LIMITED STRENGTH IN SOUTH LEBANON TO ANY APPRECIABLE
DEGREE, SUCH FENCE ONCE CONSTRUCTED WOULD REMAIN LARGELY
UNGUARDED AND THUS SERVE AS GOAD FOR FEDAYEEN TO ES-
CALATE THEIR BORDER ACTIVITIES. WE NOTE THAT ENTIRE
BORDER HAS BEEN RELATIVELY QUIET FOR PAST WEEK, FOR
REASONS WHICH WE NOT YET ABLE TO DETERMINE.) AT VERY
LEAST, FEDAYEEN COULD BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE CROSS-BORDER
FIRING OF ROCKETS, MORTARS AND SMALL-ARMS AGAINST ISRAELI
TARGETS, AND LEBANESE ARMY--THEN AS NOW--WOULD BE
UNABLE TO PREVENT THIS COMPLETELY. THIS WOULD BE
PARTICULARLY TRUE IN REMOTE REGIONS OF ARQOUB, WHERE
LEBANESE ARMY MAINTAINS VIRTUALLY NO PRESENCE AT ALL
AND IN WHICH ANY ATTEMPT TO ASSERT LEBANESE BORDER GUARD--
INANIMATE OR OTHERWISE--WOULD INEVITABLY EMBROIL ARMY
WITH FEDAYEEN ELEMENTS ANXIOUS TO PRESERVE THEIR "TURF"
AGAINST ARMY CONTROL. IN SHORT, SURVEILLANCE--IF
NOT ACTUAL CONSTRUCTION--OF "SECURITY FENCE" THE LENGTH
OF LEBANON'S BORDER WITH ISRAEL WOULD BE BEYOND
LEBANESE ARMY'S LENDER RESOURCES, AND WHILE PROVIDING SOME DETERRENCE
IT WOULD SERVE AS A NEW AND TEMPTING CHALLENGE TO FEDAYEEN TO
PENETRATE OR CIRCUMVENT AS PROOF OF THEIR DETERMINATION
TO WAGE "ARMED STRUGGLE" AGAINST ISRAEL COME WHAT MAY.

2. AN EVEN MORE INHIBITING FACTOR, IN OUR VIEW, IS AD-
VERSE IMPACT WHICH CONSTRUCTION OF SUCH FENCE WOULD HAVE
ON LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN RELATIONS AND ON DOMESTIC POLITICAL
SCENE. REAL POSSIBILITY EXISTS THAT FEDAYEEN OF ALL
STRIPES WOULD REGARD IT AS HOSTILE ACT ON PART OF
GOL AND REACT IN SUCH WAY AS TO PROVOKE ALL-OUT CONFRONTA-
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TION WITH LEBANESE ARMY THAT BOTH PLO LEADERSHIP AND GOL
HAVE LONG SOUGHT TO AVOID (SEE PARA 3 BEIRUT 644 AND OUR
7698 OF JULY 4, 1974). EVEN IF THIS DID NOT OCCUR, GOL
WOULD HAVE PLACED ITSELF IN UNTENABLE (BY ARAB POLITICAL
STANDARDS) POSITION OF OPENLY ACTING AS ISRAEL'S "PRO-
TECTOR" IN EYES OF WIDE SEGMENT OF DOMESTIC OPINION
(E.G., LEFTISTS, PRO-FEDAYEEN AND ARAB NATIONALIST FORCES,
ETC.) WHICH ADVOCATES--EVEN IF ONLY IN THEORY--FEDAYEEN

RIGHT TO PURSUE "ARMED STRUGGLE" AGAINST ISRAELI "ENEMY".

(SAME CONSIDERATIONS, IT SHOULD BE NOTED, HAVE LONG

BLOCKED PROPOSALS--MADE PRIMARILY BY CERTAIN LEBANESE

CHRISTIAN POLITICIANS--THAT GOL SEEK TO HAVE UNEF-

TYPE FORCES INSTALLED ON ITS SIDE OF BORDER WITH ISRAEL.)

WE BELIEVE NO RPT NO LEBANESE GOVT COULD SURVIVE DOMESTIC

AGITATION AND TURMOIL THAT WOULD INEVITABLY UNSUE FROM

TAKING SUCH STEP AS PRES SUGGESTS, AND THAT IT WOULD

SERVE ONLY TO INCREASE LEBANON'S DIFFICULTIES IN CONTEND-

ING WITH FORCES WHICH ALREADY ARE WORKING TO DRAG IT

DEEPER INTO CONFLICT WITH ISRAEL.

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